

No Penalty, No Peace,

IN A

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

held at

LEICESTER.

August the 10th, 1682.

By Thomas Asbenden, Rector of Dingley
in Northamptonshire.

LONDON,

Printed for John Smith in Russel-street, Co-
vent-Garden, 1682.

142.

IN A
SERMON
PREACHED AT THE
ASSEMBLY
PEACEABLE AT
LEICESTER

BY JAMES ALPENHORST, RECTOR OF DUNELA
IN MONTGOMERYSHIRE.

TONDON
PRINTED FOR JOHN SMITH IN NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, CO.
1682.

To the Honourable Richard Roberts, Esq; high Sheriff of the County of Leicester, and to the Worshipful the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.

Worthy Sirs,

THE Favourable Reception this Discourse generally had at its delivery, and the particular Approbation you all did me, the extraordinary honour to express of it, might perhaps be Arguments to men of a temper different from mine, to affect the gratifying themselves farther in the publication: But I have so great and just a Consciousness of my own weakness and inability, that truly I had not the least imagination of so doing, had not you all Gentlemen in an especial way (uncapable of any denial) laid your commands upon me.

That it appears therefore at all is in obedience to you, that it comes abroad so soon, was one part and pressure of your Injunctions. And yet it will be impossible for me to acquit this baseness of Printing, from unpardonable Levity and Vanity, unless you interpose your Favour and Authority betwixt me and Censure.

For pray let me presume to say, that the following Discourse, now is no longer mine, the Case is wholly altered, so that what was lately my Sermon is now entirely become your Book.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

These considerations have forced me upon the great hazard of exposing these weak lines to the deliberate and dangerous cast of Ocular Perusal, where such faults will be sure to be seen and arraigned, as made a shift (in the bare half and hurry) to escape the notice and censure of your Envoy.

However, *Here it is verbatim*, the first as was its delivery; nor have I dared to add or diminish (though even my weak sight discovers many loose lines and abrupt Periods) least I should belie the Title Page.

I shall (I fear) have great need of your Patronage and Protection, to temper and alleviate such Cavils and Calumnies as will be thrown by some unreasonable men of these unbridled headstrong times. Who, if sought (tho' never so gently) sharpen their (neverberating) tongues like a Serpent, and have Adders poison under their lips. Psal. 140. 3.

I conclude with my most humble thanks for your many honourable Favours to me, and with my hearty Prayers to God to encrease and prosper in you that Piety, Loyalty and Courage which you so zealously express (as far as in you lies) to advance the Peace and Prosperity of this Church and State. I am

Honourable Sir, Your most Obliged, I

Humble Servaht, ⁷ Atrodina.

Non perdu le temps de déguster ce que l'on a dans la poche.

Discourteous is no longer wine, the Côte is now the

—*gratus non si nomis. qui gloriatur inde inde ei, huius*

PECCULES 20000 15000

A

SERMON.

JUDGES the XVII. verſ. 63

*In those days there was no King in Israel,
but every man did that which was right in
his own Eyes.*

FTER the lamentable, yet not (altogether) inglorious fall of *Sampson* (in the end of the preceding Chapter) who sacrificed Three Thousand Philistines to his last rage and revenge, and raised a Monument to his victorious Death out of the ruins of the very Temple of *Dagon* their Idol God; after this famous Prince (who judged *Israel* twenty years) we read of no Judge or Governor in the Land till old *Eli*, *1 Sam. 4:18.* though we meet with some occurrences of note, and very remarkable Transactions in this *Interregnum* (as I may call it) or pause of State Government: but yet such as too plainly express the disordered constitution of those times, and strange irregularities of Impiety and Injustice,

(2)

Justice, as if all Religion and good Order did immediately vanish upon the cessation of the civil Government, of which misdemeanours the Chapter of my Text begins with one, and that of no trivial concern, you have the Narrative of it in the five verses before my Text; And 'tis how that *Micah* and his Idolatrous Mother contrived the making of a graven Image, and a molten Image, and they were kept in *Micah's* House, vers. 4. and to denote the unlimited extravagance of this superstitious humour, 'tis said in the verse afore my Text, and the man *Micah* had an house of gods, and made an Ephod and Teraphim, and Coniecrated one of his Sons who became his Priest: But here the words of my Text forthwith interpose, and by way of serious reflection on such disorderly proceedings, and to suggest plainly to us the caufe and occasion of the foregoing Idolatry, it tells us that in those loose and irregular times, *there was no King in Israel*, no supreme Power to restrain such Enormities, and therefore no better could be expected, then that *every man should do what was right in his own Eyes*; when there was no legal restraint to the contrary, no civil Power to oblige men to a strict obſervance of the ſtanding Rule and Form of the Mofaick Law. But leaſt I ſhould ſeem to take too large and unwarrantable a Liberty with the words of my Text, and to force more from it in conclusion than it will fairly bear, (for the ſum of my preient Discouſe will be to prove that where there is no exercise or exertion of civil Power in penalties for offences, there is little or no likelihood of Peace either in Church or State) leaſt my Text, I ſay, ſhould

should seem to weak a foundation for this superstructure ; since it seems to point at the matter of false Religion only , or mistakes in Divine Worship ; I will by your leave draw in one or two neighbouring parallel Texts to its assistance, and to my own in the handling of it. You have heard already what happened in *Micha's* case, how great and gross Idolatry he and his Mother were guilty of ; the occasion of which my Text doth palpably assign to the intermission of State-Government in those days, or because *there was no King in Israel*. Every man for want of a coercive Guide in the right and rational Worship of the Deity, was misled by his own private fancy and fond humour into false Worship and Irreligion, which yet seemed *right to him in his own Eyes*, though in its self most abominably Idolatrous. This happened in matters Ecclesiastical for want of a restraining Power, or a strict coercive Guide and Governour in things Divine ; *In those days there was no King in Israel*, and consequently every man drew his Religion by the model and platform of his particular opinion. But the mischievous consequence of the want of a King, or supreme Governour ended not here, for it hath been not seldom observed that the ruin of a Nation begins with a corruption or neglect of Divine Worship, and therefore as this People the Jews were misled by their own private fancies in matters of Worship for defect of a Governour ; so for the same reason they lust out into all extremities of Pride and Cruelty, Violence and Rapine, Lust and Injustice, in matters Political, or in their behaviour and carriage one towards another ; having no King to keep them within the Bounds

of the first Table, and to oblige them to a right and strict Worship of God, they forthwith stuck at nothing; but without remorse or regard broke through all the prohibitions of the second. The Chapter immediately following that of my Text, begins with these very words, *in those days there was no King in Israel*: Prefacing (as it were) the Violence and Injustice the Danites there offered to this same *Micah* in Plundering his House, with this cause and occasion thereof, *viz.* this was done because *there was no King in Israel*, to restrain and punish such Enormities. Again, the nineteenth Chapter begins with the same words, and it came to pass in those days when *there was no King in Israel*, and so forth, where you may read a dismal relation of a horrid Rape and Murther committed at once upon the Body of a Levites Concubine; the reason of all these and the like flagitious outrages is affixt (as I told you) by the first verse of the nineteenth Chapter, to the being of *no King in Israel*.

This short *Proemium*, as it doth in little display to your quick sagacity a prospect of my ensuing Discourse, so I hope it hath removed some rubs in my way, whereby my progress might have been less plain and intelligible.

My Text then doth easily seem to me to furnish us with these Four Propositions; First, That in matters of Religion and Worship, many things may seem right to men in their own Eyes, which in their own Nature are quite otherwise.

Secondly

(5)

Secondly, That Errors and Abuses of this kind fall under the Cognizance and Correction of the Civil Magistrate.

Thirdly, That 'tis no just Plea of Exemption from Punishment, for men to alledg, that they follow their Conscience, or (as my Text hath it) *do what is right in their own Eyes.*

Fourthly, That in matters Political, without Temporal Restraints and Punishments for breaches of the Second Table, all Civil Societies wou'd be destroyed, and all things run into Desolation and Confusion.

First, I say that in matters ~~of~~ ^{of} 'Tis a strange and surprizing thing seriously to consider that Truth, which is the natural and adequate Object of our Understanding, shou'd have so few Adherents, especially when we consider that it shines by no mutinous Light, that it utterly disowns all false, sour and puzzling disguises, presenting it self (unless it be our fault) always in its own simple beauty plain and naked to the Intellect; and on the contrary, that its Mimick Error, which dare never appear bare-faced, nor by its own name, but is forced to steal false Visions, Dignities and Mock-truths, to insinuate and recommend it self, 'tis strange, I say, that Error and Mistake, which is always forced to borrow some faint Aures and gloomy Shades from Truth, shou'd pass for the real Substance, whereas the true and native Beauty of Verity affects us very coldly, and is too often glanced over unregard-ed. We become easly enamour'd of Cheat and Delusion,

lusion, but are dull and insensible of the Beauty of Holiness, as the Scripture Phrases it. 2 Chron. 20. 21. 'Tis so, and as *Laban* the subtle *Syrian* jugled the blear-eyd *Leah* into *Jacobs* Bed, instead of the Beautiful and well favour'd *Rachel*; so the Devil doth ingage the greatest part of men in the Embraces of Error, of all whom, I fear very few are undeeiv'd by the dawning Light, and like *Jacob* find their mistake in the Morning, they die in Delusion.

Religion, or the right knowledg and adoration of the Almighty sprang up with Man in the very Morning of his Creation, and the Laws of both Tables (whose Original, 'tis true, was kept in the Archives of Eternity) were Engraven in the heart of Man, and Woven into the very Principles of his Existence in more lively and durable Characters than those Engraven by the finger of God in the Tables of stone; in a word, the Notions of Piety and Justice, as they were plain, so were they indeleble; And this Satan the Enemy of Mankind quickly observd, he knew (20.) and concluded, that if no stop were interpos'd, no Punishment, Diversion or Delusion, preached to draw Mankind out of this plain and right Road of true Religion, it woud by necessary consequence conduct them to Happiness. To Eradicate the Nation of a Deity he thought was impracticable, he was resolved therefore to blur, deface and confuse Mens Conceptions of the Godhead, and in effect, by this means he concluded more mischief might be done, than by fruitless Attempts of absolute Atheism. Accordingly, by little and little he drills Men off from a Spiritual and Reasonable service of the invisible God; by degrees

grees he materializes their Conceptions of him, as well as sensualizes their Inclinations and Affections; so that instead of one true God, he Enslaves them to himself, and to the whole Creation; no Object so Vile and Contemptible, no Worship so Cruel, Servile and Ridiculous, but they bow and stoop to it, after the Devil had once stamp'd it with the false mark of a God and Religion, *Oppida tota Canem venerantur, &c.*
Juven. Sat. 15. Thus they turned the Glory of God into the similitude of an Ox that eateth Hay, saith the Royal Psalmist. When they had once left the right way, they wandred in a Thousand Errors and Mazes of false Worship, when they had forsaken the reasonable Service of the true God, they were Engaged in Abominations without number; they Worship'd their own handy-work, Stocks and Stones, they Ador'd the Host of Heaven, and the Gods of every Nation; and those self same Persons that grumbled at God's easie and equal Service, and thought it much to walk mourfully before the Lord of Hosts, *Malach. 3. 14* these very Men and Women cou'd yet without grief or regret Sacrifice their Sons and their Daughters by Fire unto Devils, *2 Chron. 33. 6. &c. 2 Kings 17. 17, 18.* And this horrid piece of unnatural hellish Religion cou'd seem right in those Eyes, that cou'd not drop a Tear at the dreadful sight and loud cries of their burning Babes.

Thus in the days of old, Religion was aped and falsified in a Thousand ridiculous shapes and misrepresentations, and was drawn by the Devils own hand with such particular glances and allurements as the humor

more of the times, the tendencies of Mens debauch'd Fancies, and his own designs required; innumerable diversities and mock shapes of Worship deluded poor Mortals, the true Religion all the while being opprest and cover'd under the nasty Rubbish of Idolatry and Superstition.

But to draw my reflections into a narrower compass, and to be more particular and pertinent to my purpose; the Devil did not only heretofore confound the genuine Worship of the Deity, with several mock shews and vain pageantry of Religion: but he continued to play the same game still after the appearance of Christianity, by broaching Heresies and Scisms of all sorts, and by sowing Tares amongst the Wheat; which he hath done with such fatal success, that it being now Seventeen Hundred Years (very near) since Christianity was promulgated, and not much less since the true model and platform of it (the New Testament I mean) was delivered to us, to be for ever the Archetype Rule and Standard of Faith and Practice; yet, from this plain and uniform model designed for the help and rule of our Edification, have in all Ages been drawn by the warm Fancies of busie Enthusiasts, and the like, such monstrous Meddles, and odd Landships of Opinions, as (in another kind) the most extravagant conceits of Poets and Painters have never equal'd; and truly I think one and the other have some grounds much alike for their Whimseys, I am sure they have each of them had too much of one Priviledge, and that is the *Quidlibet Audendi Parens.* Hor. de Art. Poet.

But

But to come nearer home still, what makes so many poor deluded Souls in these distracted Kingdoms despise the Establish'd Religion, stamp'd with the Authority of Divine and Humane Laws, and instead of it grow so zealously fond of Seditious Noise and Soothing Nonsense? How patiently can Men Weekly trudge (far above a Sabbath Days Journey) to hear the voice of a stranger, so called by our Savior. John 5.

Why shou'd they so readily and freely give their Money for that which is not Bread, as the Prophet complains, Isa. 5. 1, 2. When they have Wine and Milk at home; when the Word is Preached agreeable to Christs Gospel at their own Door, purely and sincerely, constantly and carefully, zealously and devoutly? Why shou'd so many of our Country-men be impos'd upon, contrary to the pious usage of our Fore-fathers, their own Duty, and the known Laws of the Land, to leave the Assembling themselves together, to forsake the Communion of Saints, and follow after Novelty and New-fanglednes?

What foret I: Cause is it that persuades them to go through Deserts where there lies no way, but the way of the Lord have they not known, as the Wise Man saith.

What makes the rough and rugged, the crost and crooked way of Schism and Sedition seem right to 'em in their own Eyes, leaving the pleasant ways and peaceable paths of Truth and Wildome, as Solomon calls 'em?

Why shou'd Quirks and Cavils, Difficulties and Obscurities, Niceties and Novelties, Faction and Fancy, prevail more with them, than the Reasonable Plainness of the Established Religion, than the Security and Perspicuity of *the good old way*? what ^{ref. 2.} cou'd send 'em such strong Delusion, that they shou'd so steadfastly believe a Lie.

To speak here of the distant and more remote Causes of our Divisions, to shew the first springs and wheels of our Dissention, how they are hammer'd out by dark and deep Engeneers invisibly, and made to work slyly and insensibly upon such as are to be Implements and Properties upon occasion, and to do the work of Ambitious and Factious Statists; to declare to you the several subtle Agents and Embassaries that cooperate in this busines, to tell you the Methods and Machinations, the Tricks and Intrigues, the Devices and Designs, the Intent and End of their Mission; to shew you how that these Artists can make any thing appear as they glo's it, so that what they please shall seem right in the Eyes of the deluded, in a word, how they induce the Credulous to use Christian Liberty for a Cloak of Malitiousness, as saith the Apostle.

I Pet. 2.
16.

To declare, I say, all this, belongs rather to a Political Tract, than a Discourse of this Place and Nature.

I will now rather content my self with the adjacent and more apparent Causes of our present Divisions, and I shall trouble you no farther, than with the bare naming of such Inveaglements as make the several

(11)

Several Modes of Religion and false Worship in these our Days, seem right in the Eys of the Superstitious and Seditious.

The First general Cause I take to be, Ignorance and Simplicity on the one side, and Hypocrisie and Subtlety on the other, I mean the Instructions of the pretended Teachers, which were long since described by St. Paul, in the Third Chapter of his Second Epistle to *Timothy*, the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Veres, where he tells us, That they are Traytors and Heady, that they have a form of Godlinels, but deny the Power thereof, that they creep into Houses, and lead Captive silly Women, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledg of the Truth. In which words (if we Observe the behavior of our Modern Canting Holders forths) we have their picture and posture so exactly described, that unless the Apostle shou'd have named them all severally by their names, they could not have been pointed at more directly.

A Second Cause may be, Easiness and Credulity, which is accordingly work'd upon by these fly Factors that Trade in our Conventicles : They know very well that the Affections and Passions of silly Men and Women (as they are more easily stirred, so they) touch more sensibly, and operate in their motion more violently than rational Conviction and calm Perswasion ; and herein lies the great Cheat of Canting Whining Applications ; they produce very sensible and passionate Emotions in a soft and easie Auditory ; and this forsooth, and this alone must be

The operation of Gods Word and Spirit, this is Education, this is the Power of God unto Salvation; when as alas, all this pathetick Noise and moving Gestures of the cunning Speaker, never passed farther then the lower Region of the Passions, never reach'd the Seat of the Reason and Understanding of such as hear them.

A Third Cauſe of these pleſing and plausible mistakes in matters of Religious Worſhip, is a miſerable wresting and diſtorting of Scripture, ſuch places more especially, as being ſimply taken without relation to the Occaſion or Context, ſeem plainly to ſpeak the ſenſe of these People. Now these places out of Gods Word being dexterouſly tim'd and apply'd by cunning Crafts-men to Factious and Superiſtious Fancies, already tainted and infected, river the Deluſion irreverſibly in the traſtic opinion of the Brainsick-Party, of this St. Peter complains in the Third Chapter of his Second Epiftle Verſe Sixteen, telling us that Men unlearned and untaught do wrench the Scriptures to theiſ own Destructiōn.

A Fourth, And a very Powerful Cauſe to make any ſort of Religious Worſhip ſeem right in Mens own Eyes, is Prejudice; which hath feveral Branches and Diſtiuſions, yet it may be deſcribed in general to be, a fond and foſth Resolution to be one way alone in the right, right or wrong.

There is a Prejudice of Birth and Education, which poſſeſſes ſome ſo violently with the opinion of their forefathers, that a Man would think they received a ſtructure in their very Generation, and grew of their parents Sect. *To Traduce.*

(443)

To conclude this point, Religious Prejudice has sometimes Interest and Worldly Delight, sometimes Custom, sometimes Passion, sometimes Vainglory and Ambition to lead a Faction and govern the Crowd; sometimes 'tis Shame and a diffidentious Reluctancy to acknowledge our mistakes. But by so doing we shoud give our Father our Selves and the whole Party the Lie, sometimes 'tis meer Fancy and Humor, and not seldome 'tis Malice, which Perverseness and Obstinacy that confirms 'tis in Vaine Worshipp and Superstition.

Lastly, As great a Cause as any of the above mentioned, to Create Divisions and Factions in Church or State is Toleration, Liberty and Impunity, and indeed the Text takes notice of no other, as if this alone were of it self sufficient to occasion diversities of Worship, viz. The Cessation of Civil Power and Punishment; for when Men may do any thing that they think right, they will go near to think any thing right, and this brings me to my Second Observation, viz.

Secondly, That Errors and Misdemeanours in Matters of Religion, fall under the Cognizance and Correction of the Civil Magistrate; This is so plainly suggested in my Text, that it needs no further demonstration, for it was, because there was no King in Israel, that Micah ventured upon such gross Idolatry, and it was Liberty and Impunity that rendered it all right in his own Eyes, In those Days, That Kings and Princes had the care of both Temples, and the publick Temples, as also the Temples of the Kings and Princes.

n.

£1.17
20.12
.01.00

.03.5
.01.00

an.10.5
.01.00

and that they are therefore Supreme Supervisors and Governors in matters pertaining to Religion, is evident, and that they Ordred and Regulated in Ecclesiastick, as well as Secular Causes, appears in the History of *Moses*, *Job*, *Solomon*, *Hezekiah*, *John the Baptist*, &c. Besides, we read every where, that Gods Word and Message concerning Religion and Worship was always directed to Kings and Princes by his Messengers the Prophets; they were commanded to pull down the Groves, to break down the Images, and Altars of Idols, to take away abuses and corruptions in Religion, and the like, and they accordingly Govern'd the Priests, ordered their Courses, removed the Ark from place to place, commanded the Priests to read the Book of the Law, and to reduce things to a conformity with it, &c.

Moreover, the Prophet *Isaiah* saith, Prophesying of the Church in the Evangelical times, That Kings and Queens are Fosterers and Nurses of the Church.

And in the primitive and purest times of Christianity, the Christian Emperours did not only appoint the general Councils of the Bishops, but the good Emperour *Constantine* (though a temporal Prince) thought it no sacrilegious encroachment, no sin of *Uzziah* to judge in Causes Ecclesiastical, as he did between the *Donatians* and *Catholicks*.

And farther, as if this spiritual supremacy were not only a Divine Right, but a natural positive privilege of Kings, Aristotle tells us, *Εάν τις της της Στρατηγού*. The King is Lord and Ruler in

1/2. 19.
23. &
60. 16.

2 Cro.
26. 16.

Politic.
lib. 3.

in things that appertain to the God^o Tis true, that our profest Enemies of the Papal and Presbyterian Faction, are violent opposers of these assertions; their Pride and Ambition will allow of no Rival or Competitor, much less a supream Governor in Ecclesiastick affairs; they who engross the Monarchy of the Church, and exclude temporal Princes from interposing there, that they may with greater ease enslave the State, and tyranize over our Souls, Bodies, and Estates, with the old plausible cheat of *in ordine ad spiritualia*.

But surely temporal Princes are grown wise enough (by this time of day) to discover the old Imposture, and to assert their Royal Prerogative in this point, against the subtle, and equally dangerous encroachments both of Pope and Presbyter. For not a few Princes have found to their cost by fatal experience; that spiritual and secular supremacy are inseparable, like twins they are born and bred together, and have always been found to sympathize so far, that the one being extant, the other doth not long survive. Let Princes be but once baffled out of their Ecclesiastical Superiority, and 'twill not be long e're they will be trampled upon from *Rome* (as once Pope *Alexander* served the Emperour) with the prophanes insulting insolence of *super apidum et cabis & basiliscum*; which our Phanatick Reformers, in the late Tragick times thus Englished, To bind their Kings in Chains, and their Nobles in Fetters of Iron, such honour have all his Saints.

15. Upon proceeding the reformation of abuses in Religion, hath been proved from Scripture, and the usage and consent of the primitive Church to belong to, the civil Power; though much more might be said. And 'tis not only the respective Duty of Kings, if they regard the Glory of God (whose Ministers they are), but 'tis also their nearest interest and especial concern, if they value the honour and safety of their own regality, to prevent the rise and growth of divisions and schismatisms in Religion, and to oppose and crush the propagation of false Doctrine, Heresy, and Schism, which (sooner or later) never fail to hatch and engender Sedition, privy Conspiracy and Rebellion. Too late, and too clear Proofs evince the truth of this.

Alas, 't is neither the Priest nor the Prophet can stop the broaching and running on of Scism and Faction, nor hinder the fatal mischiefs that flow from separations in Religious Worship, without the execution of penal Laws, without the effectual interposition of the temporal Sword. If Disputing, Writing, or Preaching, could have effected any thing, 't is most probable that all our late distractions and present divisions, had been cured and convinced, as well as baffled and confuted, *si pergam dexter*, &c. No, no, the perverse heretical Spirit that agitated in the first ages of Christianity, worketh yet still in the Children of disobedience. And when good and learned men offer at a Cure by publick Writing and Dispute, the fruitless consequence shews plainly that the wrong remedy is applied, the malady lying more in

In the Perverseness of the will than the mistake of the Intellect: And for this caute demonstration in self often fails of conviction, and the strongest and plainest truths urged home to Scismaticks, stay not but are sent back in a faint retort, stult more with weak evasions, and peevish cavil than right or reason. Whence 'tis apparent that Hypocrify and Subtilty, Arrogancy and Obstinacy, not Reason or Judgment hold the Cudgels; 'Tis in vain therefore to hope that the strongest and most zealous Arguments will ever reduce Scism and Faction to an amicable compliance, since their pride always forearms them with a resolution to demur at demonstration, and cavil at conviction. 'Tis the *Argumentum taciturnum* (must do the work, no demonstration so convincing as that of a Penal Statute, no perswasion so preising as that of a legal mulct. At least the example and reverence the Power and Presence of the temporal Prince, is necessary (next to Gods Grace) to the maintenance of true Religion and regular Worship. Nay the very presence alone of the Supreme Magistrate, and the awe of his personal appearance amongst the people, is of it self very often the confirmation, encouragement, and life of Religion: *A King sitting in the Throne of Judgment, scatereth away all evil with his Eyes; Prov. 20. 8. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16.* When people are not engaged and poisid by the reverential awe and dread of their Superiors Person and Power, but are Idle, Loose, and at Liberty; it hath been observed that the first degred of Innovation and Faction hath been a Tinkering with their

own Fancies about points of Religion, hammering out strange gods, and fondly forging new modes of Worship. We have a notable proof and instance of this in the 12 Chapter of *Exodus*, where the chiefest occasion of that abominable Idolatry of the molten Calf, was the Peoples impatience of *Moses* delay and stay in the Mount, his only absence set their superstitious inclinations in a new ferment; and as in every Religion it self were flown away and departed in the person of *Moses*, they set upon *Aaron* with this tumultuous exclamation; come make us Gods, for as for this *Moses* we wot not what is become of him. This People however (by the way) shewed more modesty and obedience than our modern Sectaries; for in the absence of the Civil Magistrate, they appeal to the High Priest for a Religion, whereas our Factious Dissenters will neither follow the Religion of Prince nor Priest.

Thirdly, The third Proposition imply'd in my Text is, That 'tis no just plea of exemption from punishment, for men to alledge that they follow their Conscience, or (as my Text hath it) *do what is right in their own Eyes*. For if the Profession and Practice of the Christian Religion, as 'tis now by Law Established, be no farther obligatory than as it hits and suits the private Conscience of each particular man; the consequence is clear, and matter of Fact hath too lately convinc't us that a Torrent and Inundation of Religion, Libertinism, and Atheism, will certainly follow. This hath been (as I said) too evident from Fact it self, (the highest

con-

conviction) in our late deplorable confusions, nor doth it want its notional and speculative plenitude, too; for if private Conscience (so called) be in some men mere humour and whimie, in many Ja-
terest, Malice and Passion, in most men Ignorance, Custom and Prejudice; what a monstrous medley of mischiefs must private Conscience necessarily pro-
duce, when she is impregnate with such a lewd in-
terior, such a pernicious viperous brood? Besides, This
destructive Principle sets up a Tribunal in every pri-
vate mans factious fancy (for though I have a sa-
cred regard to the thing Conscience, yet I can allow
it no better a name in the sense we now mention) and makes the Authority of Heaven and Earth, and
the Wisdom and Laws of a whole Nation to be of
no effect, force or value, till they are sign'd and
seal'd by the humourol approbation of every ledi-
tious crazy Enthusiast, it inverts the whole Course
of Nature, and the reason of things; it lays the
Law at the Feet and Mercy of the offendour, and
baults the Felon to the Seat of the Judge; For there
can be no whimfies so ridiculous, no concepions so
monstrous, no tenets so blasphemous, no practices so
mischievous, but will take sanctuary here, and plead
a little to Impunity under pretence of this Liberty
of Conscience, which cannot in short be better de-
scribed than as the Poet expresses *Polis hemin, tis mon-
strum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.*
I am sure it hath proved as blind and bloody,

For
D. 3
With this the country in the very heart of
difficult

For to mince the matter no longer, but to speak the naked truth, all this doleful noyse of scruple and tendernesse, all the queremonious clamour is of a Nature quite contrary to what it appears, and the Arguings and Disputings of our Sectaries (in plain terms) is not for Truth but for Dominion; like expert and curning Commanders, they amuse and divert us with dilatory, Treat, and Capitulation, till they can handsomly make head, and once again draw their Forces into the Field of Battle. Their voice is Jacobs voice, but their haads are the hands of Esau.

Undoubtedly we may thank our selves for the edge and keennes of our prelent divisions, and our manifold menacing mischiefs we may chiefly date from the late Toleration; such allowances proceed from Royal mercy and tendernesse, 'tis true, but the dangers that always ensue are innumerable and grow to a formidable stature by insensible degrees, till at length they suck themselves into a State and Habit, strong enough for Rebellion, even from the Breasts of Royal Indulgence. If the good and wholom Acts of Uniformity had been applied without remissnes, we should by this time have found mens puries more tender than their Consciences; at least twould have done so much good, that the old Pique had been buried with this Generation, and the next would have conform'd of Course; whereas I fear the late long Impunity hath fixt the contagion in the very Vitals of our dissent-

disenting Brethren, and their Children will be tainted ex traduce.

Nay farther, There is a more mischievous consequence still from such grants of Liberty in Religious Worship, and we suffer the same Judgment the Israelites did, in permitting the Canaanites to dwell among them, *wz.* Many even of us have been inticed to go a whoring after their Gods, and as the Angel told the People at *Bochim* ; *They are left to be Thorns in our sides*, *Judg. 2. 3.*

And yet I would not willingly be mistaken in this part of my Discourse neither, as if I hinted at a tyrannical and cruel Inquisition ; I declare that I urge no unnatural force or usurpation over the Opinions and thoughts of men, nor would I fetter or shackle the understanding (which is undoubtedly in Nature as free as the Will) much less would I commit a Rape upon a truly tender and modest Conscience ; or like the cruel Romanists, force a blind obedience upon any man. For, (as a worthy Divine saith) 'Our Church is not against any mans seeing spiritual truths with his own Eyes, only we would not have the blind presume to teach others to see, we would not have men think they see when they do not, which is the most certain way for them never to see at all.'

Our Church by applying the soft and gentle remedies of statutable Punishments, never intended to force.

for gross blindness, or impose the tyranny of implicit faith upon any man, but rather the quite contrary, she carefully and wisely considered that a little smart might make the scales peel off from mens Eyes, and by some little bitterness she designs no more harm to them, than *Tobias* did to his old Father, by throwing gall in his Eyes to make him see.

It is (to conclude this point) extreamly admirable and incomprehensible to me, that so many of our Country-men should out of an odd pevish humour, and most unaccountable Caprice, forsake that sober decent way of Worship, which the established law prescribes, which their gracious king and goverour himself strictly observes, together with the Loyal Nobility, Magistracy, and Gentry, and the most reverend and learned Clergy of this Land, that they should, I say, leave these good, these great, these wise Examples, contrary to the obedient humble temper of Christians, contrary to the Prudence and Interest of rational men, and contrary to the honest good Nature of true English-men: and all this out of a blind and ignorant compliance to the insinuating hypocritical persuasions of a few leading Prejudic'd Presbyters: For true scruple of Conscience cannot be said to urge them to this nonconformity; not one of five hundred understanding the intrinsick State of the debate, any more than they doe *Arabick*: but granting that they could plead Christian scruple, how far would even that fall short of Justification, Seing that the commands to Obedience

dience are so absolute, so plain, so positive, and the preferences for Separation (even at best) so obscure, so weak, so dubious.

In a word, The Faith of our Nonconformists is as blind and implicite as that of the Papists; the design of their Doctrines as subtle, sensual and secular.

Fourthly, and Lastly, My last Observation is, That without Legal severities, and Temporal Punishments of Secular or Political Misdemeanors, all Societies wou'd run the unavoidable danger of Confusion and Dissolution. The horrid outrages, and most flagitious Villanies of Robbery and Plunder, of Rape and Murder, which the Two next Chapters after that of my Text tell the lamentable Story of, these Villanies I say are prefaced (as it were) in *limine*, at the first Entrance of their Narration, with half my Text, *In those Days there was no King in Israel*: which intendeth those dismal Stories hints plainly to us the occasions of the Jewish losenesse of those abominable Times!

We all know, and freely grant, ('tis true) that Propositions about right and wrong, just and unjust, are as little liable to dispute and contest; and less subject to doubt and difficulty, than Mathematical Theorems and Conclusions; for though they also are acknowledged to be Truths of Eternal date, though their Evidency is Evinced with much pain and state of formal demonstration, yet without all doubt,

doubt, Moral Truths do most justly challenge the Precedence, as more easily clear, and with less trouble, demonstrable ; or rather, the truth and surety of them is of such a Nature as less needs a demonstration ; besides our natural impressions of Justice, and its contrary, are less obnoxious to Errors and mistakes, and oversights, (than Geometrical Principles) they command universal assent, and assault our radical Reason so forcibly, as that the bare mentioning of these Moral Truths is of it self irresistible proof, and without farther delay or dispute they themselves are their own demonstration.

In a word, All Sects of Philosophers in all Ages have joyn'd Issue here ; however they have in all things else thwarted each other, and there hath been a general concurrence of all Mankind, as to the common notions of Virtue and Justice : Here the *Sextus* and *Ariston* of the Platonicks easeth, and freely owns, that there are some undoubted fixed truths in Morality : and in this case the rigid Stoicks break the bands of Fate and Necessity, and acknowledg that here there is *avt^oz^oo^o n^o x^o i^o d^o h^ou^o*. And, as to this affair, *Aristotle* (who will hardly allow any Man but himself in the right) doth willingly shake hands with *Socrates* and the Moralists : *Adeo illud ratum certumq; est quod honestum*, as one faith.

But for all this, notwithstanding our conceptions of Justice and Virtue are confessedly true, and univer-

universally so, yet they wou'd all prove in effect but naked Notions, Trifles, Speculations, and vain Ideas, without the awful terror of the *Passes* and *Securis*, without the enforcement of the Civil Magistrate, without the interposal of the Temporal Sword. And most undoubtedly, without these, that radical Rule of Justice it self, that highest and most fixt truth in Nature, *Quid ibi fieri non vis alterne feceris*, even this woud as rarely and difficultly appear in real Fact and Experiment, as the Philosophers Stone, or the admired Phoenix. *Proced melloka ergo, deteriora sequor*, woud I fear, be the highest pitch of practical Morality, without the mediation of legal Punishments of all sorts.

Nor that I here fully suggest, as if the Essence and Obligation of Justice and Virtue had no other Being, no stronger a Foundation, no longer a date, than that of positive Laws, and humane constitutions, God forbid.

But I mean (in a word) that such is the general corruption of humane Nature, so pressing are the present allurements of Profit and Pleasure, of Pride and Ambition, so forcible are the suggestions of Poverty, Malice and Revenge, so distant are the Fears and Threats of the other World, and so Egging and Incouraging are the thoughts of Impunity here, that were it not more for fear of Temporal Disgrace and Punishment, than for any future Terrors.

of Ruin hereafter, the World would become a Den of Beasts and Tygers; and without doubt, Man would be (in the state I speak of) *Non solum lupus sed demon homini.*

It is fine, I am inclined to think, that most Men dread the Presence of a Temporal Judg, more than they do the Appearance of the Lord of Hosts; that a Day of Assizes here on Earth strikes a greater horror in many, than the thoughts of the most dreadful Day of Judgment, and that the fear and shame of a Branding-Iron had kept more Men Honest and Just, than the apprehensions of Everlasting Burnings, From which, good Lord deliver us.

I will conclude all in desiring your Prayers to God with me, That he would so rule the heart of his chosen Servant *Charles* our King and Governor, that he (knowing whose Minister he is) may above all things seek God's Honor and Glory, and that we and all his Subjects (duly considering whose Authority he hath) may faithfully serve, honor and humbly Obey him, according to his Blessed Word and Ordinance: And that our Almighty Father woud be pleased to bless and keep all the Magistrates and Judges of this Land, giving them grace to Execute Justice, and to maintain Truth. The Grace, &c.

E I N I S

